

Appendix table 7-18.

**Public assessment of general scientific research: 1979–2001**

| Characteristic  | 1979 | 1981 | 1985 | 1988 | 1990 | 1992 | 1995 | 1997 | 1999 | 2001 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Percent   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>All adults</b>   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results .....              | 46   | 42   | 44   | 57   | 47   | 42   | 43   | 47   | 47   | 47   |
| Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results .....              | 24   | 28   | 24   | 25   | 25   | 31   | 29   | 28   | 27   | 25   |
| Benefits equal harmful results .....                          | 19   | 13   | 13   | 5    | 15   | 11   | 16   | 13   | 11   | 19   |
| Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits .....              | 7    | 12   | 13   | 9    | 10   | 12   | 10   | 8    | 10   | 7    |
| Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits .....              | 4    | 5    | 6    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 3    |
| <b>Male</b>   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results .....              | 51   | 48   | 48   | 59   | 54   | 45   | 47   | 52   | 50   | 49   |
| Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results .....              | 23   | 27   | 23   | 25   | 24   | 30   | 28   | 27   | 27   | 27   |
| Benefits equal harmful results .....                          | 16   | 11   | 10   | 5    | 9    | 9    | 13   | 10   | 9    | 15   |
| Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits .....              | 7    | 10   | 13   | 7    | 9    | 11   | 9    | 7    | 10   | 7    |
| Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits .....              | 3    | 5    | 6    | 4    | 4    | 5    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 2    |
| <b>Female</b>   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results .....              | 42   | 37   | 40   | 55   | 40   | 40   | 39   | 42   | 45   | 44   |
| Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results .....              | 25   | 28   | 26   | 25   | 26   | 31   | 30   | 29   | 28   | 23   |
| Benefits equal harmful results .....                          | 23   | 16   | 14   | 6    | 20   | 13   | 19   | 15   | 12   | 22   |
| Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits .....              | 6    | 14   | 14   | 10   | 11   | 12   | 10   | 10   | 10   | 8    |
| Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits .....              | 4    | 5    | 6    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 3    |
| <b>Less than high school graduate</b>                         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results .....              | 26   | 26   | 20   | 37   | 24   | 24   | 18   | 30   | 25   | 28   |
| Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results .....              | 25   | 23   | 21   | 30   | 25   | 33   | 30   | 28   | 25   | 27   |
| Benefits equal harmful results .....                          | 32   | 25   | 26   | 9    | 30   | 17   | 34   | 21   | 18   | 26   |
| Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits .....              | 12   | 18   | 20   | 17   | 17   | 20   | 14   | 18   | 22   | 13   |
| Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits .....              | 5    | 9    | 13   | 7    | 4    | 7    | 3    | 3    | 10   | 6    |
| <b>High school graduate</b>                                   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results .....              | 50   | 43   | 47   | 59   | 49   | 41   | 44   | 46   | 47   | 45   |
| Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results .....              | 26   | 31   | 26   | 25   | 27   | 32   | 30   | 30   | 31   | 25   |
| Benefits equal harmful results .....                          | 16   | 10   | 10   | 5    | 11   | 10   | 13   | 13   | 10   | 20   |
| Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits .....              | 5    | 12   | 13   | 7    | 10   | 12   | 10   | 6    | 8    | 8    |
| Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits .....              | 3    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 3    | 5    | 3    | 5    | 4    | 2    |
| <b>Baccalaureate and higher</b>                               |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results .....              | 69   | 64   | 67   | 80   | 72   | 66   | 67   | 67   | 71   | 64   |
| Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results .....              | 18   | 22   | 23   | 16   | 18   | 22   | 23   | 23   | 19   | 23   |
| Benefits equal harmful results .....                          | 8    | 7    | 2    | 1    | 6    | 8    | 6    | 6    | 5    | 9    |
| Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits .....              | 2    | 4    | 6    | 2    | 2    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 4    | 2    |
| Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits .....              | 3    | 2    | 2    | 1    | 2    | 2    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 2    |
| <b>Attentive public to science and technology<sup>a</sup></b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Benefits strongly outweigh harmful results .....              | 67   | 63   | 59   | 62   | 61   | 48   | 64   | 64   | 61   | 55   |
| Benefits slightly outweigh harmful results .....              | 16   | 20   | 17   | 23   | 19   | 27   | 21   | 19   | 21   | 20   |
| Benefits equal harmful results .....                          | 8    | 5    | 7    | 6    | 10   | 12   | 8    | 6    | 5    | 13   |
| Harmful results slightly outweigh benefits .....              | 4    | 8    | 13   | 6    | 6    | 9    | 3    | 8    | 11   | 9    |
| Harmful results strongly outweigh benefits .....              | 5    | 4    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 3    | 2    | 4    |

See explanatory notes, if any, and SOURCE at end of table.

Appendix table 7-18.

**Public assessment of general scientific research: 1979–2001**

| Characteristic  | 1979  | 1981  | 1985  | 1988 | 1990  | 1992 | 1995  | 1997  | 1999  | 2001  |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sample size (number)  |       |       |       |      |       |      |       |       |       |       |
| <b>All adults</b> .....                                       | 1,635 | 1,536 | 2,005 | 975  | 2,033 | 997  | 2,006 | 2,000 | 1,882 | 1,574 |
| Male .....  | 773   | 724   | 950   | 475  | 964   | 464  | 953   | 930   | 900   | 751   |
| Female .....  | 862   | 812   | 1,054 | 500  | 1,070 | 533  | 1,053 | 1,070 | 982   | 823   |
| Less than high school graduate .....                          | 465   | 385   | 507   | 259  | 495   | 215  | 418   | 420   | 403   | 116   |
| High school graduate .....                                    | 932   | 886   | 1,147 | 546  | 1,202 | 579  | 1,196 | 1,188 | 1,111 | 834   |
| Baccalaureate and higher .....                                | 238   | 264   | 349   | 170  | 336   | 203  | 392   | 392   | 368   | 614   |
| Attentive public to science and technology <sup>a</sup> ..... | 154   | 381   | 235   | 116  | 229   | 94   | 195   | 288   | 216   | 195   |

<sup>a</sup>To be classified as attentive to a given policy area, an individual must indicate that he or she is “very interested” in that issue, is “very well informed” about it, and be a regular reader of a daily newspaper or relevant national magazine. Individuals who report that they are “very interested” in an issue but do not think that they are “very well informed” about it are classified as the “interested public.” All other individuals are classified as members of the “residual public” for that issue area. The attentive public for science and technology combines the attentive public for new scientific discoveries and the attentive public for new inventions and technologies. Any individual who is not attentive to either of those issues but who is a member of the interested public for at least one of those issues is classified as a member of the interested public for science and technology. All other individuals are classified as members of the residual public for science and technology.

NOTES: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding. A few respondents did not provide information about their highest level of education. Responses are for the following statements:

–People have frequently noted that scientific research has produced both beneficial and harmful consequences.

–Would you say that, on balance, the benefits of scientific research have outweighed the harmful results, or have the harmful results of scientific research been greater than its benefits?

–Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of beneficial results or only slightly?

–Would you say that the balance has been strongly in favor of harmful results or only slightly?

SOURCE: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics (NSF/SRS), NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, various years.

See figure 7-6 in Volume 1.

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